

## Cold War Historic Properties at Aberdeen Proving Ground

In the spring of 1997, the Cultural Resource Management Program at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) initiated a survey and evaluation of its Cold War era (1946-1989) historic properties. After two years of archival and field work, APG recently submitted its final evaluations to the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) for review and approval, per Title 36, Part 800, of the Code of Federal Regulations. The installation's cultural resource manager developed and oversaw the project, and completed it with research participants from the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) student fellowship program. The study served as a compliance project mandated by Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, and Army Regulation 200-4, "Cultural Resources Management."

Established in 1917, APG is the Army's premier installation for research and development, testing and evaluation, and soldier training. Located on the western shore of the upper Chesapeake Bay, about 25 miles northeast of Baltimore, Maryland, APG occupies approximately 75,000 acres. Aberdeen Proving Ground's cultural resources encompass a wide breadth of the American experience. They include prehis-

toric and historic archeology sites, as well as extant colonial-era buildings, an early 19th-century lighthouse, turn-of-the-century farmhouses, and World Wars I and II military facilities, all of which are subject to provisions of the NHPA.

With the end of the Cold War (marked by the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989), public historians within academia and the federal government initiated studies to examine its impact on American society, including the military. Through the early 1990s, the Department of Defense's Legacy Resource Management Program provided grants for Cold War related research projects, and in 1995, the Army produced interim guidance to address issues of National Register eligibility. This interim guidance evolved into a section of the Army's pamphlet on cultural resources and a comprehensive historic context, entitled *Thematic Study and Guidelines: Identification and Evaluation of U.S. Army Cold War Era Military-Industrial Historic Properties*. In 1997-98, APG developed its own installation-specific historic context and in the same year embarked on a survey of over 800 buildings and structures on the post.

The ORISE research participants used various CRM tools to complete the survey and evaluation project. The installation's state-of-the-art geographic information system (GIS) provided detailed maps which enabled the students to locate and photograph the properties in a timely fashion. By applying the Army historic contexts and National Register criteria, the researchers focused on particular property types, specifically those associated with Army production and combat subsystems. For proving grounds, identified property types consisted primarily of research laboratories and testing facilities.

Through consultation with the MHT, APG identified property types considered not exceptionally significant. Between December 1998 and January 1999, APG and the MHT agreed that 698 of the buildings surveyed did not meet

*Terminal Ballistics Laboratory, c. March 1949. Photo courtesy U.S. Army Garrison, APG, DSHE.*



National Register criteria consideration G for properties less than 50 years old. In June 1999, APG submitted the remaining 100-plus properties on MHT-requested National Register eligibility forms. The submissions included black and white photographs, site maps, and National Register evaluations. Overall, APG inventoried and evaluated a total of 813 Cold War properties, of which only 12 met the National Register eligibility criteria. As of September 1999, APG is awaiting concurrence from the MHT.

Building 309, the Terminal Ballistics Laboratory, is an example of an APG Cold War historic property that ORISE participants surveyed and evaluated. Constructed in 1947, this building served as a primary laboratory for the Ballistics Research Laboratory complex, focusing on technological advances in ballistics and high-speed photography. During the survey and evaluation project, the building occupant proposed replacing all 86 of the existing metal-framed, multi-paned windows. The ORISE participants and MHT concurred that #309 was eligible for the National Register and agreed that the new windows would be an "adverse effect." Upon additional consultation with the MHT and Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, APG entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that required APG to document the building on a Maryland Historic Property Inventory Form. The documentation is now available in the MHT's archives.

Besides the NHPA compliance aspects of this project, one of its real successes was the use of the ORISE program. An interagency agreement between the Departments of Energy and Defense allows the Army to transfer funds into a student fellowship program overseen by ORISE. In turn, ORISE solicits resumes from students, competitively screens applicants based on interviews and scholastic performance, and places the successful candidates with a Defense agency. While the students are not ORISE or Defense employees, they serve as program participants, receive mentoring, and take on specific environmental or engineering research projects.

During the course of the Cold War project, APG's use of the ORISE program significantly reduced the cost of the compliance-based project. Instead of hiring a private cultural resource firm that could charge as much as \$400 to survey and evaluate a single property, APG utilized the ORISE student fellowship program at a cost of

approximately \$85 per property. A survey and evaluation project such as APG's, involving over 800 properties, could have cost the Army \$320,000. Instead, with ORISE, the project cost under \$70,000, a significant savings for the Army and federal government.

Another important aspect of APG's Cold War identification and evaluation project is that it served as a practical training exercise for aspiring historic preservationists. It gave three college students (Tracy Dunne, Sameena Nooruddin, and Renee Sciuto) the experience of working at the federal agency level while performing a real, compliance-based cultural resource project. The skills acquired by these students during the course of the project, such as researching historic properties and applying National Register criteria, have made them competitive candidates for graduate school, public agencies, and the private sector.

Overall, by dealing with issues of preserving the recent past at APG, the Army has demonstrated proactive stewardship of its Cold War era historic properties. Not only does APG now have a better handle on its Cold War era properties that are eligible for the National Register, but it also has streamlined its management responsibilities for compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. By completing the identification and evaluation project, APG has significantly reduced the amount of time and effort needed to review future mission-related undertakings. As a result, APG has enhanced military readiness at APG and the quality of life for its soldier and civilian communities.

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